



# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**COMBATING TERRORISM IN THE BRAZILIAN TRI-BORDER  
AREA: A NECESSARY LAW ENFORCEMENT STRATEGIC  
APPROACH**

by

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June 2007

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<b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.				
<b>1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)</b>		<b>2. REPORT DATE</b> June 2007	<b>3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED</b> Master's Thesis	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> Combating Terrorism in the Brazilian Tri-Border Area: A Necessary Law Enforcement Strategic Approach			<b>5. FUNDING NUMBERS</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> Adriano M. Barbosa				
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> N/A			<b>10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b> The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.				
<b>12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited			<b>12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE</b>	
<b>13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)</b> <p>The whole world is in some way affected by terrorism. It has many faces, different causes, and comes about by distinct ways around the globe. As a consequence, in the Brazilian Tri-border Area (TBA) terrorism has its own characteristics. In the TBA, terrorist groups are focused on supporting activities for their organizations.</p> <p>The problems related to terrorism in the TBA are connected with the struggle between Arabs and Israelis in the Middle East. Terrorist groups, such as Hezbollah and HAMAS, have operatives in the TBA in order to raise money and provide logistics to support their groups. In addition, these supporting activities are, as a rule, criminal efforts.</p> <p>So in the TBA, the best statecraft instrument to combat terrorism is law enforcement. In the Triple Frontier crime is the center of gravity for terrorism, and, as a consequence, the police are the most capable agency to deal with this situation. They can better prosecute organizations that perpetrate crimes to support terrorist groups.</p> <p>Hence, Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay must develop a strategic law enforcement approach to combat terrorism, based on ends, ways and means, with emphasis on police intelligence operations and covert criminal investigations.</p>				
<b>14. SUBJECT TERMS</b> Tri-Border Area (TBA), Triple Frontier, Terrorism, Organized Crime, Counter-terrorism, Homeland Security, Law Enforcement, Police, Investigation, Strategy, Tactics.			<b>15. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> 77	
			<b>16. PRICE CODE</b>	
<b>17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT</b> Unclassified	<b>18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE</b> Unclassified	<b>19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT</b> Unclassified	<b>20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b> UL	

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**COMBATING TERRORISM IN THE BRAZILIAN TRI-BORDER AREA: A  
NECESSARY LAW ENFORCEMENT STRATEGIC APPROACH**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS**

from the

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## **ABSTRACT**

The whole world is in some way affected by terrorism. It has many faces, different causes, and comes about by distinct ways around the globe. As a consequence, in the Brazilian Tri-border Area (TBA) terrorism has its own characteristics. In the TBA, terrorist groups are focused on supporting activities for their organizations.

The problems related to terrorism in the TBA are connected with the struggle between Arabs and Israelis in the Middle East. Terrorist groups, such as Hezbollah and HAMAS, have operatives in the TBA in order to raise money and provide logistics to support their groups. In addition, these supporting activities are, as a rule, criminal efforts.

So in the TBA, the best statecraft instrument to combat terrorism is law enforcement. In the Triple Frontier crime is the center of gravity for terrorism, and, as a consequence, the police are the most capable agency to deal with this situation. They can better prosecute organizations that perpetrate crimes to support terrorist groups.

Hence, Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay must develop a strategic law enforcement approach to combat terrorism, based on ends, ways and means, with emphasis on police intelligence operations and covert criminal investigations.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to thank the following for their contributions and support, which enabled me to complete this thesis: my two advisors, Dr. Dorothy Denning and Dr. Douglas Borer, for inspiring me with their expertise and guidance.

My wife, Ana Claudia, for her priceless support, encouragement, and patience. Federal Police Commissioners Mr. Renato da Porciuncula and Daniel Lorenz for their incentive and professional support.

The men and women of the Brazilian Federal Police's Anti-Terrorism Service for their inspirational job in contributing to the fight for a world free from the threat of terror.

And, above all, I thank God, who provides me serenity and strength.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. BACKGROUND

The whole world is in some way affected by terrorism. Although it has different faces across the globe, and expresses itself in different ways, terrorism is a phenomenon<sup>1</sup> which sometimes occurs as a strategy,<sup>2</sup> or sometimes as a tactic,<sup>3</sup> that comes about with the use of violence or the threat of violence to generate fear among the citizenry, and disestablish the regime in order to achieve political goals.<sup>4</sup> Around the globe one can find different kinds of groups that use terrorism to accomplish political ends, such as the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna or ETA (Basque for Basque Homeland and Freedom) in Spain, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in England, the Aryan Nation in the United States, the Abu Sayyaf Group in the Philippines, and the Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan or PKK (Kurdish for Kurdistan Workers Party) in parts of south-eastern Turkey, north-eastern Iraq, north-eastern Syria and north-western Iran. In all these places terrorism, sometimes domestic, sometimes transnational, is present creating its innocent victims and spreading fear throughout the civil population.

In South America, terrorism has its own type of expression. It is most often linked to criminal activities and most terrorists have distinct connections with organized crime. In the post 9-11 era there are two relevant regions in South America that face terrorism, namely Colombia and the Tri-border Area (TBA). The first confronts the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo or FARC-EP (Spanish for Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia–

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<sup>1</sup> Lindsay Clutterbuck, *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 141.

<sup>2</sup> Ivan Arreguin-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars. A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict," *International Security* 26, no. 1 (2001): 103.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen D. Biddle, "American Grand Strategy After 9/11: An Assessment," (2005) <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB603.pdf> [accessed September 30, 2006].

<sup>4</sup> Peter C. Sederberg, "Conciliation as Counter-Terrorist Strategy," *Journal of Peace Research* 32, no. 3 (1995): 296.

People's Army<sup>5</sup>), a former insurgent group, which originated from an ideological revolutionary movement. Nowadays, however, the FARC-EP is a guerrilla group strictly concerned with political goals in the Colombian territory using terrorism as a tool to achieve its objectives. Moreover, the FARC-EP today is far from its ideological roots and does not need popular support to sustain itself, obtaining its funds from criminal activities. The relationship between the FARC-EP (terrorist-guerrilla organization) and organized crime (drug trafficking) is a pragmatic arm's-length relationship. The FARC-EP provides security and safe havens for narco-trafficking, and the drug dealers finance FARC-EP in support of its terrorist activities.

The Tri-border Area (TBA) by Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay has other peculiarities that link the area with terrorism and organized crime. Terrorism in the TBA is necessarily associated with its supporting activities. The bottom line is that the terrorist organizations Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya or HAMAS (Arabic for Islamic Resistance Movement), Hezbollah (Arabic for Party of God) and Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya (Arabic for the Islamic Group) have operatives inside the TBA to provide funding and logistics to their terrorist endeavors. Consequently, the actors involved in the TBA scenario are different from those found in others regions of South America, like Colombia. In the TBA, they are related to religious terrorism<sup>6</sup> inspired by Islamic extremism, and linked to the struggle in the Middle East between radical Arabs and regimes supported by Western states, like Israel and Egypt. Hence, the terrorist operatives in the TBA are not part of the Global Salafi Jihad.<sup>7</sup> In addition, they are connected to assorted types of crimes, such as smuggling, credit card fraud and money laundering in order to support their terrorist operations.

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<sup>5</sup> Mark P. Sullivan, "Latin America: Terrorism Issues," CRS Report for Congress, January 18, 2006, 2.

<sup>6</sup> David C. Rapoport et al., *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 61.

<sup>7</sup> Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 61.



The roots of this link between organized crime and terrorism in the Brazilian TBA are deep-seated. This thesis argues that there are three factors which prompted terrorism in the Brazilian TBA: the end of Cold War, a former lack of stricter state efforts in the area, and Arab immigration. During the Cold War, terrorist organizations were broadly sponsored by states<sup>8</sup> that used those groups to affect their enemy in an oblique way. Thus, terrorist groups were financed and supported by state sponsorship. However, since the bankruptcy of the Soviet Union and, consequently, the end of the Cold War, terrorist groups have become an unnecessary tool of statecraft<sup>9</sup> in the new international order. On the other hand, today it is still possible to find states that support terrorist organizations, such as Iran and Syria<sup>10</sup>, which sponsor terrorist groups like HAMAS and Hezbollah. Consequently, the decline in the ability of state sponsorship led terrorist groups to rise their own funding and manage logistics on criminal bases.



Figure 1. The Tri-Border Area in the Circle. <sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Glenn E. Curtis and Tara Karacan, "The Nexus Among Terrorists, Narcotics Traffickers, Weapons Proliferators, and Organized Crime Networks in Western Europe," Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Meghan L. O'Sullivan, *Shrewd Sanctions, Statecraft and State Sponsors of Terrorism* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> David Tucker, *Skirmishes at the Edge of Empire: The United States and International Terrorism* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1997), 76.

<sup>11</sup> Jeffrey Fields, "Islamist Terrorist Threat in the Tri-Border Region," Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS), Monterey Institute of International Studies, (October, 2002) [http://www.nti.org/e\\_research/e3\\_16a.html](http://www.nti.org/e_research/e3_16a.html) [accessed September 29, 2006].

During the 1980's and early 1990's, developments in the TBA area were not a priority, in terms of security, to the countries that form the region. Consequently, proliferation of criminal activities was consolidated in the TBA. During that period, smuggling was inserted in the local culture, and it was not seen as an organized crime effort. As a matter of fact, smuggling, regarding its criminal condition, was seen as a mere "irregularity" by the population and the authorities. The consequence was that "innocuous" illicit activity (smuggling) attracted other illegal pursuits, and soon the TBA became a place where criminal organizations developed drug trafficking; weapons trafficking; piracy of all sorts of goods; money laundering; credit card fraud; clandestine phone communications; counterfeiting of passports, identification documents (I.D.) and international flight tickets; false marriages; and child adoptions. This criminal environment became very appealing to terrorist groups, which could raise funds there to support their cause.

The immigration of Arabs into the TBA is another element that has fomented the connection between organized crime and terrorist organizations. In the TBA, the Arab community could find a place to develop its traditional business in commerce without worries about discrimination, and many Arabs were attracted by the local "smuggling culture" that could promote opportunities to make "easy money." This agglomeration of Arabs, most of them from Lebanon, allowed the infiltration into their community of individuals linked to terrorist organizations, most commonly Hezbollah and HAMAS. Such an environment allowed the rise of organized crime as the center of gravity for terrorism in the Brazilian TBA.

## **B. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate that the best response to terrorism in the Brazilian TBA is a response based on law enforcement with a

strategic approach of ways, means and ends<sup>12</sup> in order to diminish terrorist activities. That resolution comes from the following syllogism: crime is the center of gravity (COG) for terrorism in the Brazilian TBA. The best response to crime is law enforcement efforts.

Therefore, law enforcement efforts are the best response to terrorism in the Brazilian TBA. Terrorist organizations have their operatives in the TBA just because they realize that in such an area they will be able to raise funding and logistics to benefit themselves. Furthermore, those supporting activities are developed on an illegal basis; consequently crime activities are the reasons that justify the presence of terrorist groups in the TBA. So, if one can disrupt this connection between organized crime and supporting of terrorist organizations in the TBA, terrorist activities in this area will be as forceless as possible. In this context law enforcement<sup>13</sup> conducting a coordinated counterterrorist effort in the three sides of the TBA will be the appropriated state instrument to combat terrorism.

### **C. RELEVANCE**

Unfortunately, the Brazilian TBA is still considered a safe haven<sup>14</sup> for terrorists in South America. But there are few assessments concerning the essence and the genesis of the problems related to terrorism in the TBA. Furthermore, there are no studies about responses that have been made to the problem, and what things must be worked on to change that paradigm. Consequently, to present the real dimensions and boundaries about terrorist activities in the Brazilian TBA and to offer the correct responses to confront them is highly relevant. So, by analyzing the reasons that explain why terrorist

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<sup>12</sup> Arthur F. Lykke, Jr., "Toward an Understanding of Military Strategy," in *U.S. Army War College Guide to Strategy*, ed. Joseph R. Cerami and James F. Holcomb, Jr., (February 2001), 179.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas O'Connor, "The integration of Homeland Security and Law Enforcement," (2004) <http://faculty.ncwc.edu/toconnor/427/427lect07.htm> [accessed May 31, 2006].

<sup>14</sup> Rex Hudson, "Terrorist and Organized Crime Groups in the Tri-Border Area (TBA) of South America," The Library of Congress, Federal Research Division (July 2003), 68.

organizations act in the Brazilian TBA and what must be done to combat those groups, Brazil and the international community can reach a plausible solution in dealing with terrorism in the TBA.

#### **D. METHODOLOGY**

This thesis will follow four methodological steps. First, the causes of terrorism in the Brazilian TBA will be analyzed. It will be done through a historical approach focused on relevant historic events in the international arena and inside the TBA. Second, the problem related to terrorism in the Brazilian TBA will be delineated and its real dimensions will be defined. Then, the limits of the problem that involve the nexus between organized crime and terrorism will be studied, and how this relationship works within the TBA. At this point a critical case study<sup>15</sup> with strategic importance in relation to the problem will be used to illustrate and to clarify the deeper causes of organized crime and terrorism. Lastly, this thesis will present the appropriate response to the problem of terrorism which challenges the TBA's countries and the international community.

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<sup>15</sup> Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 49.

## **II. TERRORISM IN THE BRAZILIAN TRI-BORDER AREA (TBA)**

One of the most important steps in a political science study is to identify the historical causes of a problem that has been analyzed. If an analyst is just concerned with the exterior effects (consequences) of a problem, he or she will just touch its surface, and will repeat only the conventional wisdom about it. Hence, one can say that to better understand a complex situation it is necessary, but not sufficient, to point out how the facts are presented and who the actors involved in it are. The analyst must go further. He or she has to investigate the root of the problem and the reasons that drive the actors to play their roles in such an arena in order to establish the real boundaries that surround it.

Consequently, when scholars<sup>16</sup> argue that there is terrorism in the Brazilian TBA<sup>17</sup> but do not demonstrate the historical reasons of this phenomenon and its limits, this assessment is probably what one can call a half-truth because it is a statement that includes only some aspects that compound the framework in which the problem is inserted.

In this chapter the historical causes that explain the presence of terrorist operatives in the Brazilian TBA will be analyzed. Three factors are presented in this chapter as historical sources of the activities that link terrorism to the Brazilian TBA: the end of the Cold War, a former lack of stricter state efforts in the area, and Arab immigration. The first one is a global factor, whereas the other two are regional. Concluding, the real problem related to terrorism in the TBA is introduced.

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<sup>16</sup> Rex Hudson, "Terrorist and Organized Crime Groups."

<sup>17</sup> John Lombardi and David Sanchez, "Terrorism Financing and the Tri-border Area of South America," *Terrorist Financing and State Responses in Comparative Perspective*, (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006).

## **A. THE CAUSES**

### **1. The End of the Cold War**

Terrorist groups, just like other organizations,<sup>18</sup> need supporting efforts such as funding, logistics, and communications in order to reach their goals. In other words, they need support to maintain their endeavors. That support can be provided by different sources such as governments, the civil population, Non-governmental Organizations (NGO's), political parties, and criminal enterprises. The fact of the matter is that, in some way, they have to have sources of sustainment. Rachel Ehrenfeld argues that, "Today's global terrorism requires money for much more than individual attacks. An expanding terror network must have enough funds to support:

- Recruitment
- Training camps and bases
- Housing and food
- Equipment, explosives, and conventional and unconventional weapons
- Forged identity and travel documents
- Intelligence gathering
- Communications among organizational components
- Bribery
- Day-to-day maintenance expenses of members awaiting commands to launch operations."<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, John Picarelli and Louise Shelley assert that:

In the past, the predominant source of terrorist financing was state sponsorship. The close of the Cold War and the international

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<sup>18</sup> Richard L. Daft, *Essentials of Organization Theory and Design* (Cincinnati, OH: South-Western College Publishing, 2003).

<sup>19</sup> Rachel Ehrenfeld, *Funding Evil. How Terrorism is Financed – and How to Stop It* (Chicago and Los Angeles: Bonus Books, 2003), 1.

community's increasing emphasis and agreement led to a decline in the number of potential state sponsors of terrorism as well as the overall amount of sponsorship.

Concluding they say:

New forms of financing have arisen to supplant these lost funds. Crime, specifically forms of organized crime (defined as crime that involves repeated activity involving more than two people), rose in prominence as a source of terrorist financing. Networks of terrorist cells cooperate to commit crime just as criminal organizations do.<sup>20</sup>

During the Cold War an external patron<sup>21</sup> was one of the most important forms of support for terrorist groups. For instance, the former Soviet Union used to sponsor terrorist groups around the world as a tool of statecraft. Rachel Ehrenfeld affirms that:

Most modern international terrorist organizations were trained, sponsored, and supported by the Soviet Union and its surrogates to help expand Marxism and Leninism. To them, Communist domination meant the absence of national boundaries and the presence of a globalized Communist world order. According to the Soviet Military Encyclopedia, their objective was to conduct unconventional warfare to subvert and destabilize the targeted nations. The Soviets trained the PLO and various nationalists groups in guerrilla and terror techniques, and used those groups to expand Soviet influence.<sup>22</sup>

Once the Soviet Union imploded, the state sponsorship of terrorism decreased and lost its place as a primary source of support of terrorist groups. However, state sponsorship still remains; it is weaker, but alive. Syria and Iran are important examples of states that support and use terrorist groups to achieve

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<sup>20</sup> John T. Picarelli, Louise I. Shelley, *Organized Crime and Terrorism, Terrorist Financing and State Responses in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Giraldo and Trinkunas (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> Peter C. Sederberg, "Conciliation as Counter-Terrorist Strategy," *Journal of Peace Research* 32, no. 3 (1995): 307.

<sup>22</sup> Ehrenfeld, *Funding Evil*, 7.

political ends in the international arena. These countries, as Libya<sup>23</sup> did in the past, have been harboring and helping terrorist groups. They provide sanctuaries<sup>24</sup> (physical safe havens), resources (funds, weapons), training, and safe passage for terrorists. David Tucker asserts that:

Syria's support of the Kurdish Workers Party is not coupled with direct demands on the Turkish government for specific concessions but rather is one of a number of tools used to shape a complicated political situation in Syria's favor. This is also how the Iranians use the various terrorist groups they support.<sup>25</sup>

Consequently, terrorist organizations could no longer depend only on states to support their activities. Other sources of funding and logistic would be necessary to keep the terrorist groups able to develop their endeavors. The solution came from the use of two different means: legal and illegal activities. Donations and charities<sup>26</sup> on one hand, and criminal activities<sup>27</sup> on the other, were the alternatives that terrorist organizations found to support themselves. Jeanne K. Giraldo and Harold A. Trinkunas say that:

The end of Cold War marked a watershed moment in the nature of terrorist finances. During the Cold War, terrorists were said to be heavily dependent on state sponsors for their funding, but became increasingly self-sufficient during the 1990's, relying instead on crime and others self-financing methods.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Meghan L. O'Sullivan, *Shrewd Sanctions. Statecraft and State Sponsors of Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 173.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Government National Security Council, National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, September 2006, 15.

<sup>25</sup> Tucker, *Skirmishes at the Edge of Empire*, 76.

<sup>26</sup> Evan F. Kohlmann, "The Role of Islamic Charities in International Terrorist Recruitment and Financing," DIIS Working Paper No. 2006/7, Danish Institute for International Studies, 2006, 2.

<sup>27</sup> David E. Kaplan, "Paying for Terror," U.S. News & World Report (December 5, 2005), <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/051205/5terror.htm>.

<sup>28</sup> Jeanne K. Giraldo and Harold A. Trinkunas, "The Political Economy of Terrorist Financing," in *Terrorist Financing and State Responses in Comparative Perspective*, (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 3.



Those new methods of terrorist financing<sup>29</sup> drove terrorist groups to search the world for places that could provide other opportunities to support their endeavors. The Brazilian TBA, formed by Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay, was one of those places chosen by terrorist groups in which to raise funding and manage logistics. The Brazilian TBA “offered” conditions to terrorists, some historical and geographical, and some circumstantial, that allowed them to establish their supporting activities. Such conditions were: a region with porous borders,<sup>30</sup> a tri-border area with a circulation of thousands of people and goods,<sup>31</sup> a lack of stricter state efforts,<sup>32</sup> presence of criminal organizations involved in transnational crimes of smuggling and money laundering,<sup>33</sup> and the presence of an Arab community<sup>34</sup> free of discrimination and incorporated into the local community.

## **2. The Former Lack of Strict State Efforts**

Any border area in the world is a challenge for the government in terms of control and security. For instance, the United States of America (USA), which has borders with two different countries and an enormous apparatus of security and control, faces difficult problems involving illegal immigration,<sup>35</sup> smuggling<sup>36</sup> and drug trafficking<sup>37</sup> along its frontiers. Paul Lunde, for instance, affirms that

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<sup>29</sup> Giraldo and Trinkunas, “The Political Economy of Terrorist Financing,”3.

<sup>30</sup> Lombardi and Sanchez, “Terrorism Financing.”

<sup>31</sup> Rex Hudson, “A Global Overview of Narcotics-funded Terrorist and Other Extremist Groups,” Library of Congress, Federal Research Division, May 2002.

<sup>32</sup> Hudson, “Terrorist and Organized Crime Groups.”

<sup>33</sup> Philip K. Abbott, “Terrorist Threat in the Tri-Border Area: Myth or Reality?” Military Review, September-October 2004, 51.

<sup>34</sup> Maria Moreira, “Islam in Brazil,” <http://www.islamfortoday.com/brazil.htm> [accessed July 27, 2006].

<sup>35</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, “Illegal Immigration, Border-Crossing Deaths Have Doubled Since 1995; Border Patrol’s Efforts to Prevent Deaths Have Not Been Fully Evaluated,” August 2006.

<sup>36</sup> Ralph Vartabedian, Richard A. Serrano and Richard Marosi, “The Long, Crooked Line; Rise in Bribery Tests Integrity of U.S. Border,” Los Angeles Times (October 23, 2006), A.1.

<sup>37</sup> U.S. Federal News Service, Including U.S. State News, “Owner of House Used in Border ‘Drug Tunnel’ Pleads Guilty,” (Washington, D.C.), October 13, 2006.

“the Mexico-U.S. border is one of the most porous in the world.”<sup>38</sup> In addition, *The Los Angeles Times* released the following report about some problems that the USA has faced along its borders:

Bribery of federal and local officials by Mexican smugglers is rising sharply, and with it the fear that a culture of corruption is taking hold along the 2,000-mile border from Brownsville, Texas, to San Diego.

At least 200 public employees have been charged with helping to move narcotics or illegal immigrants across the U.S.-Mexican border since 2004, at least double the illicit activity documented in prior years, a Times examination of public records has found. Thousands more are under investigation.

Criminal charges have been brought against Border Patrol agents, local police, a county sheriff, motor vehicle clerks, an FBI supervisor, immigration examiners, prison guards, school district officials and uniformed personnel of every branch of the U.S. military, among others. The vast majority have pleaded guilty or been convicted.<sup>39</sup>

Moreover, Paul Lunde claims that:

Mexican organized crime handles the export of heroin, cocaine, and marijuana, as well as illegal immigrants, into the United States. The tremendous level of legitimate commercial traffic across the Mexican-U.S. border makes control of illegal activities difficult, as does the porous border, more than 1,875 (3,000 km) long. Half the cocaine entering the U.S. comes via Mexico. In addition, the cross border trade in pirated and counterfeited goods has become extremely lucrative in recent years.<sup>40</sup>

Hence, the TBA deals with problems that any other border area deals with around the globe. Although the TBA’s geographical particularities explain part of

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<sup>38</sup> Paul Lunde, *Organized Crime: An Inside Guide to the World’s Most Successful Industry* (London, UK: Dorling Kindersley, 2004), 25.

<sup>39</sup> Vartabedian, Serrano and Marosi, “The Long, Crooked Line,” A.1.

<sup>40</sup> Lunde, *Organized Crime*, 14.

the problem, they do not justify its reputation of permissive environment.<sup>41</sup> Rather, a lack of strict state efforts in the TBA explains its being a lawless area. Chris Zambeli asserts that:

The Tri-Border Area (TBA) that binds Puerto Iguazu, Argentina; Ciudad del Este, Paraguay; and Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil, is another center of lawlessness and lucrative criminal activity in South America that includes Russian and Asian gangs, in addition to South American criminal syndicates. Hezbollah is reported to operate extensive operations involving fundraising and money laundering amidst the region's sizeable Arab community in the TBA.<sup>42</sup>

This lack of strict state effort is strongly related to the economic crisis during the 1980's and early 1990's, and the consequent acceptance of smuggling as an illegal but tolerable activity in a hard economic period. The figure of the *sacoleiros* (small-time Brazilian importers<sup>43</sup>) rose in this period. The *sacoleiros* are unemployed people or small businessmen that go to Ciudad del Este<sup>44</sup> in Paraguay to import goods in small amounts with no payment of taxes. Products like cigarettes, electronic goods, cameras, liquor,<sup>45</sup> and perfumes are the typical goods smuggled by the *sacoleiros* into Brazil. The problem is that organized crime saw how permissive the region was in terms of control of goods and people and started to use it to commit crimes such as drug trafficking, weapons trafficking, money laundering and credit card fraud. The initial local permissiveness with smuggling attracted Russian, Chinese and Lebanese mafias to develop their criminal activities in the TBA, more precisely on the Paraguayan side of the tri-border.

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<sup>41</sup> Lombardi and Sanchez, "Terrorism Financing."

<sup>42</sup> Chris Zambelis, "Radical Islam in Latin America," *Terrorism Monitor* III, no. 23 (December 2005): 10.

<sup>43</sup> Hudson, "Terrorist and Organized Crime Groups," 12.

<sup>44</sup> William W. Mendel, "Paraguay's Ciudad del Este and the New Centers of Gravity," *Military Review*, March-April 2002.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

One can affirm that Ciudad del Este has been the local area where criminal organizations established their headquarters to act in the TBA. William W. Mendel asserts that:

Paraguay - landlocked, poor, a long way from everywhere and seldom appearing in the drama of international events, is nevertheless emblematic of our global security challenge. It is a place having suffered crippling wars, where governance has always been a challenge, and where smuggling and criminal organizing is a tradition. Long disregarded by the intelligence and diplomatic services of the great powers, it is now a place where international crimes like money laundering, gun-running, drug trafficking, migration fraud, and terror-planning recombine and metastasize.

Concluding he adds:

Ciudad del Este, a boom town on Paraguay's eastern border facing Brazil and Argentina, is an appropriate target of our new concerns. Regional security scholars have aptly called it a nest of spies and thieves.<sup>46</sup>

Moreover, Paraguay is not a Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF) member and its legal, operative, and financial system is described as “underdeveloped.”<sup>47</sup> Hence, Ciudad del Este has attracted criminal organizations as well as terrorist groups like HAMAS, Hezbollah and Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya that are interested in fund raising, money laundering and safe havens. Ciudad del Este, for instance, “generated US\$12 to \$13 billion in cash transactions annually as of 2001, making it the third city worldwide behind Hong Kong and Miami.”<sup>48</sup> This situation contaminates the whole TBA, also affecting the Brazilian and Argentinean sides of the borders.

However, the condition of lawlessness in the region is no longer applied to the whole area. This reputation remains, unfortunately, as a paradigm, but it is

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<sup>46</sup> Mendel, “Paraguay’s Ciudad del Este.”

<sup>47</sup> Lombardi and Sanchez, “Terrorism Financing.”

<sup>48</sup> Curtis C. Connell, “Understanding Islam and Its Impact on Latin America,” (Research Report, Air University, April 2004), 31.

no longer unquestionable. Surely, as with any other border area, there are problems related to security in the TBA, but to sustain that the entire TBA is a paradise for criminals, terrorists and spies demonstrates a lack of knowledge about what is going on in the most important South American tri-border area.

Important efforts have been developed to increase state strictness in the TBA. The Brazilian government, for example, has enforced the law in the Triple frontier. Brazil, in 2005 and 2006, inaugurated two modern regional offices for the Departamento de Policia Federal or DPF (Portuguese for Federal Police Department), and another one for the Secretaria de Receita Federal or SRF (Portuguese for Secretariat of Federal Revenues), which is the Brazilian customs branch. Those new offices represent a great improvement in terms of security and control of people and goods that transit between Foz do Iguacu and Ciudad del Este. The consequence is that the sacoleiros are disappearing from the Ponte da Amizade (Portuguese for Friendship Bridge), which links Brazil and Paraguay in the TBA; in addition, the circulation and even the presence of criminals has become much more difficult in the area.

Moreover, to combat the problems related to activities that support terrorist groups a joint regional intelligence center sponsored by the Three Plus One forum that includes Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, plus the United States of America was created. This center is located in the new DPF regional office in Foz do Iguacu and brings together officials from the three countries that form the TBA. The U.S. Department of State's Western Hemisphere Overview says that:

Brazil hosted a meeting of the broad 3+1 group in December. Delegates reaffirmed their commitment to fulfill obligations outlined in UNSCR 1373 and to exchange information among governments. Additionally, the four countries reiterated the need to strengthen law enforcement ties by organizing a meeting for TBA public prosecutors in early 2006. Brazil agreed to fully implement the Regional Intelligence Center in Foz do Iguacu by mid-2006, and to invite Argentina and Paraguay to send official representatives to

staff it. The Three also agreed to implement joint patrols of Itaipu Lake and adjacent waterways and continue work on integrated immigration and border control.<sup>49</sup>

In addition, Lombardi and Sanchez assert that:

The “Three Plus One” is a sub-regional level counterterrorism security mechanism established by the three TBA countries in 1998. “Three Plus One meetings (the three TBA countries plus the United States) serve as a continuing forum for counterterrorism cooperation and prevention among all four countries.”<sup>50</sup>

### **3. Arab Immigration**

The last historical factor that explains the presence of terrorist operatives in the TBA is Arab immigration to South America. The three American continents have been a place of Arab migration beginning during the nineteenth century. The largest Arab community in the world outside the Middle East is in Brazil. “There are over 12,000,000 Brazilians of Arab ancestry. Of these 12,000,000 Brazilian Arabs, over 9,000,000 are of Lebanese ancestry, making Brazil's population of Lebanese three times greater than that of Lebanon. Other Brazilians of Arab descent are mainly Syrian. Moreover, the majority of Arabs in the Americas are not Muslim, they are Christians.”<sup>51</sup>

The Arab community in the TBA is not really sizeable; it is only estimated at 12,000 to 70,000.<sup>52</sup> When compared with the Arab community in Foz do Iguacu (300,000) and in Brazil (12,000,000), it is possible to state that in the TBA the Arab population is not substantial. But the Arab Muslim community in the TBA, mostly of Lebanese and Syrian origin, served as an element of attraction

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<sup>49</sup> U.S. Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Country Reports on Terrorism, April 28, 2006, 158.

<sup>50</sup> Lombardi and Sanchez, “Terrorism Financing.”

<sup>51</sup> Wikipedia, “Arab diaspora,” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lebanese\\_diaspora](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lebanese_diaspora) [accessed August 3, 2006].

<sup>52</sup> Boris Saavedra, “Confronting Terrorism in Latin America: Latin America and United States Policy Implications,” Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, National Defense University, 2003, 208.

for terrorist operatives. As the Arabs are integrated with the locals in the TBA, and do not suffer any kind of segregation or harassment, terrorist operatives could come to the TBA and infiltrate the local population. Howard Vicent Meehan asserts that:

There is evidence that a percentage of the Lebanese diaspora in Ciudad del Este identifies with radical Islamic fundamentalist ideology consistent with Hezbollah's rhetoric and ideology. A letter to Lebanese businessman Assad Ahmad Barakat from Hezbollah's Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah thanking him for his financial contributions to El Martir obtained in an October 2001 police raid on one of Barakat's many Ciudad del Este businesses indicates active fundraising operations by radical terrorists in the TBA.<sup>53</sup>

In addition, terrorist operatives were attracted by the permissive environment that allowed the free circulation of people and goods through the triple frontier as well as the practice of crimes such as smuggling and laundering money. Consequently, among the good and peaceful Arabs that immigrated to the TBA, there were people interested in making easy money raising funds and running logistics for terrorist groups. This money and logistics, coming from criminal endeavors, provided resources to the operations conducted by HAMAS, Hezbollah and Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya in the Middle East.

## **B. THE PROBLEM**

Analyzing the historical elements that explain the presence of terrorist operatives in the TBA, one can affirm that the problem related to terrorism in the area is the nexus between organized crime and terrorism that allows terrorist groups to raise funds and run logistics to benefit their operations and operatives.

Terrorist activities linked to radical Islamism in South America are generally associated with criminal activities. Normally, these crimes are connected with clandestine phone communications, counterfeiting of passports,

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<sup>53</sup> Howard Vicent Meehan, "Terrorism, Diasporas, and Permissive Threat Environments. A Study of Hezbollah's Fundraising Operations in Paraguay and Ecuador," (Master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, December 2004), 28.

identification documents (I.D.s) and international flight tickets, false marriages and child adoptions, drug trafficking, smuggling, money laundering, weapons traffic, and credit card fraud. These criminal activities provide money and logistical support to terrorist organizations. Hence, crime is the center of gravity (COG) for terrorism in the TBA.



### **III. THE NEXUS BETWEEN ORGANIZED CRIME AND TERRORISM**

As demonstrated in Chapter II, organized crime is the center of gravity (COG) for terrorism in the TBA. Hence, to better understand how the convergence of crime and terrorism<sup>54</sup> works, and specifically how it works inside the TBA, this chapter will investigate the association between criminal activities and terrorism. Consequently, this analysis will provide information and arguments to better comprehend how organized crime and terrorism come together in the Triple Frontier.

In addition, a case study of a representative criminal organization that perpetrated its crimes in the TBA and had connections with terrorism is examined. Then, its organization, leadership, and modus operandi are analyzed. This case study comes about as a qualitative research tool that is applied to support the thesis hypothesis.<sup>55</sup> It is a critical case that can be defined as having strategic importance in relation to the problem. Moreover, when selecting the Panorama operation for case study, this thesis uses information-oriented sampling, as opposed to a random sampling.

Organized crime is a kind of criminal effort that comes about as an organizational enterprise where criminal activities are carried out systematically by a formal criminal organization in order to raise profit. This organizational structure differentiates this type of criminal activity from ordinary criminality, which occurs without any relevant organizational support. R.T Naylor points out that:

Common criminality is mostly associated with predatory crimes – burglary, armed robbery, ransom kidnapping, and the like – acts

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<sup>54</sup> Chris Dishman, "The Leaderless Nexus: When Crime and Terror Converge," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, (2005).

<sup>55</sup> Van Evera, *Guide to Methods*, 49.

that involve forcible or fraudulent redistribution of wealth, are episodic in nature, and require little long-term supporting infrastructure.<sup>56</sup>

Furthermore, Paul Lunde claims that:

Organized crime is an economic activity, and differs from street gangs like the Bloods and Crips, not just in the degree of organization and purpose, but because organized crime accumulates capital and reinvests it. It is this that differentiates organized criminal groups from street gangs and “unorganized” criminals.<sup>57</sup>

Therefore, it is this type of organized criminal endeavor that this thesis is concerned about, and it will guide the studies on the nexus between crime and terrorism.

The connection between organized crime and terrorism is not particular to the TBA. This melding of forces is a global tendency that can easily be found around the world. David E. Kaplan, Bay Fang, and Soni Sangwan claim that this “new face of terrorism can best be seen in Western Europe.” Moreover, they continue, “crime is now the main source of cash for Islamic radicals in Europe.”<sup>58</sup> Terror experts Glenn E. Curtis and Tara Karacan point out that:

The overlapping and cooperation of the activities of organized crime groups and terrorist groups has increased in recent years. Association of the two types of groups has occurred in three broad patterns. The first pattern is alliances for mutual benefit, in which terrorists enter agreements with transnational criminals solely to gain funding, without engaging directly in commercial activities or compromising their ideologically based mission. This arrangement normally has been the first form of contact between the two types of group. The second pattern is direct involvement of terror groups in

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<sup>56</sup> R.T. Naylor, *Wages of Crime: Black Markets, Illegal Finance, and the Underworld Economy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 15.

<sup>57</sup> Lunde, *Organized Crime*, 8.

<sup>58</sup> David E. Kaplan, Bay Fang and Soni Sangwan, “Paying for Terror: How jihadist groups are using organized-crime tactics--and profits--to finance attacks on targets around the globe,” *U.S. News & World Report* 139, no. 21 (December 5, 2005): 40.

organized crime, removing the 'middleman' but maintaining the ideological premise of their strategy. The third pattern is the replacement of ideology by profit as the main motive for operations.<sup>59</sup>

One can affirm that the crime-terror nexus<sup>60</sup> is an alliance based on a convergence of interests. The primary reason that drives terrorist groups to the criminal field is the necessity to obtain needed funds and services to support their operations and the terror organization itself.<sup>61</sup> Terrorists are associated with crime in order to fund their terror activities. Actually, crime can provide cash on a fast and regular basis for terrorist organizations, and criminal enterprises allow terrorist groups to diversify sources of funds and operate in the underground market.<sup>62</sup> Terrorists are able to bankroll their endeavors with no dependency on popular aid. In addition, Vladimir Kudryavtsev, Viktor Luneyen and Viktor Petrishchev state that "... modern terrorist structures cannot survive unless they rely on a powerful material and financial framework which often is fuelled by criminal businesses."<sup>63</sup>

The illicit endeavors, in which terrorist groups are commonly interested, are the ones that can provide them money, logistics, communication, transport and safe legal status. Consequently, the most common crimes which link terrorism and organized crime are drug trafficking, clandestine phone communications, identity theft, sales of counterfeit goods, piracy, counterfeiting of passports and identification documents (I.D.s), smuggling, money laundering, weapons traffic, and credit card fraud. In the words of John P. Sullivan:

Organized crime and terrorism are related in complex and diverse ways. Crime of many varieties is frequently used to fund terrorist

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<sup>59</sup> Curtis and Karacan, "The Nexus Among Terrorists," 22.

<sup>60</sup> Tamara Makarenko, "The Crime-terror Continuum: Tracing the Interplay between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism," *Global Crime*, no. 1 (February 2004).

<sup>61</sup> Picarelli and Shelley, *Organized Crime and Terrorism*.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Vladimir Kudryavtsev, Viktor Luneyen and Viktor Petrishchev, "Terrorism and Organized Crime Under Globalization Conditions," *Social Sciences* 36, (2005): 87.

activity. This may include smuggling, identity theft, sales of counterfeit goods (cigarettes, clothing, videos, etc.), illicit technology transfer, gems smuggling, piracy, high-tech crime and many varieties of fraud.<sup>64</sup>

Additionally, he reveals:

Money laundering is at the core of global organized criminal enterprise. It is in this transaction or enterprise where terrorists, gangsters and other illicit actors are most likely to cooperate. These links sometimes mature into alliances of convenience.<sup>65</sup>

Reinforcing the existence of these converging points that put gangsters and terrorists on the same path, Hayder Mili claims that:

Since early 1990s, Western law enforcement agencies have noted an increasing reliance on criminal activity by terrorist networks around the world. Funding sources from the Persian Gulf, charities and other non-governmental fronts have been placed under pressure. This development, compounded by the arrests of several high-ranking coordinators and financiers of operations in Europe and North America – such as Abu Doha and Fateh Kamel – have compelled jihadi networks to adapt and further diversify their funding sources. Consequently ‘traditional’ criminal activities like drug trafficking, robbery and smuggling are rapidly becoming the main source of terrorism funding. In fact, many recent terrorist attacks have been partly financed through crime proceeds.<sup>66</sup>

The attack on the Madrid metro on March 11, 2004<sup>67</sup> provides a useful example of a terrorist operation strictly financed by criminal activities. The jihadists that conducted those attacks funded their operation with cash from drug trafficking. The attack of the Madrid metro illustrates the deadly union of the crime-terror nexus. In this episode, 191 people were killed in four blast zones;

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<sup>64</sup> John P. Sullivan, “Terrorism, Crime and Private Armies,” *Low Intensity Conflict and Law Enforcement* 11, no. 2/3 (2002): 239.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Hayder Milli, “Tangled Webs: Terrorist and Organized Crime Groups,” *Terrorism Monitor* IV, no.1 (2006): 8.

<sup>67</sup> Steven Woehrel, “March 11 Terrorist Attacks in Madrid and Spain’s Elections: Implications for U.S. Policy,” CRS Report for Congress, October 5, 2004.

another 1,741 were wounded. One can affirm that this attack was the most devastating act of terrorism in European history, except for the 1988 bombing of Pam Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland.<sup>68</sup> Kaplan, Fang, and Sangwan assert that:

The terrorists behind the Madrid attacks were major drug dealers, with a network stretching from Morocco through Spain to Belgium and the Netherlands. Their ringleader, Jamal "El Chino" Ahmidan, was the brother of one of Morocco's top hashish traffickers. Ahmidan and his followers paid for their explosives by trading hashish and cash with a former miner. When police raided the home of one plotter, they seized 125,800 ecstasy tablets--one of the largest hauls in Spanish history. In all, authorities recovered nearly \$2 million in drugs and cash from the group. In contrast, the Madrid bombings, which killed 191 people, cost only about \$50,000.<sup>69</sup>

#### **A. ORGANIZED CRIME AS THE CENTER OF GRAVITY FOR TERRORISM IN THE TBA**

In the TBA, organized crime and terrorism converge. This convergence is based on links between radical Islamic terrorist groups linked to the struggles in the Middle East, such as HAMAS and Hezbollah, and their supporting criminal activities. In addition, there is no official information from any intelligence or law enforcement agency (national or international) that indicates the presence of terrorist operational cells or training camps active within the area. Therefore, this connection between organized crime and the support of terrorist organizations or terrorist operatives is the typical terrorist activity in the TBA. According to Salvador Raza:

The principal terrorist activities in the Southern Cone are directly related not to the local societies, but to a deep-seated network of

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<sup>68</sup> Richard Blystone, "Remembering the Lockerbie Tragedy," <http://www.cnn.com/LAW/trials.and.cases/case.files/0010/lockerbie/remember.html> [accessed December 20, 2006].

<sup>69</sup> Kaplan, Fang, and Sangwan, "Paying for Terror," 40.

organized crime and international terrorism, and the region is being used as a centre of support and fund-raising to finance these activities.

Although in the past the revolutionary movements had the support of the national population of the countries where they were operating, and were deeply linked with the lives of the people and with those countries' insertion in the world economy and politics, and were essentially a specific phenomenon but with important similarities to other groups from other areas, the terrorism now present in the region is not representative of that region.

Although the old groups represented local society, or claimed to represent it, with its consent and support the terrorism now present in the region is marginal and represents other communities, particularly the Chinese mafia and Islamic extremist groups operating worldwide.<sup>70</sup>

Actually, the reason that has driven terrorist groups to act inside the TBA is their interest to freely perpetrate crimes that can support their activities. In fact, crime is the central element that has attracted terrorist groups like HAMAS to the Triple Frontier. Within the TBA one can deduce that there is an equation where the presence of organized crime perpetrating illegal activities in order to support terrorist endeavors is the independent variable (IV), while the presence of terrorist groups linked to the Middle East conflicts is the dependent variable (DV).<sup>71</sup> Thus, the hypothesis is that organized crime activities cause the presence of terrorist organizations in the TBA.

Furthermore, one can use a graphic technique, such as the Venn diagram,<sup>72</sup> to better illustrate the relationship between organized crime and terrorism in the TBA.

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<sup>70</sup> Salvador Raza, "Terrorism in the Southern Cone: 'Prosfictional' View and Power Politics," (CSRC discussion paper 05/55, September 2005), 14.

<sup>71</sup> Van Evera, *Guide to Methods* 10.

<sup>72</sup> Frank Ruskey and Mark Weston, "A Survey of Venn Diagrams," Department of Computer Science University of Victoria, Victoria, B.C., Canada, <http://www.combinatorics.org/Surveys/ds5/VennEJC.html> [accessed January 23, 2007].

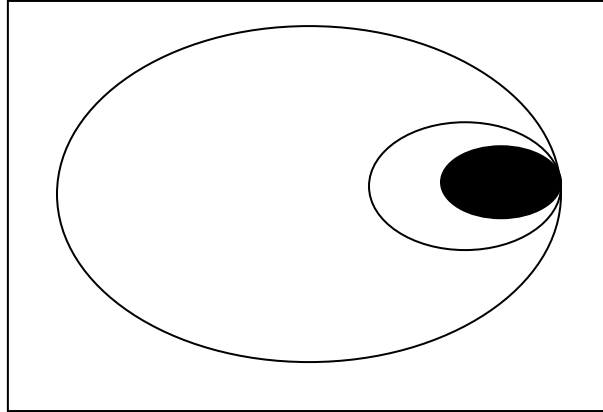


Figure 2. The relationship between organized crime and terrorism in the TBA.

In Figure 2 the black circle represents terrorism and the white circles represent the TBA area (the largest) and organized crime (the smallest). Here, terrorism and organized crime are inserted in the TBA living in a symbiotic relationship. It is a commensalism,<sup>73</sup> where terrorists and criminals “eat at the same table,”<sup>74</sup> co-existing in the same space, and one organism (terrorism) benefits while neither harming nor helping the other (organized crime).

Terrorist organizations simply wish to benefit from crime’s lucrative offerings. Needless to say, if the conditions that attract organized crime to the TBA are terminated, terrorist groups will no longer be attracted to the region.

## B. CASE STUDY

The following case study is based on unclassified reports.<sup>75</sup> made by the Antiterrorism Service or SANTER (Portuguese for Serviço Anti-Terrorismo), an agency in the DPF. Some of this thesis’ assumptions that are related to the case originated from inferences developed by the author. Names of persons and

<sup>73</sup> The University of the Western Cape, The Department of Biodiversity and Conservation Biology, s.v. “symbiosis,” [http://www.botany.uwc.ac.za/sci\\_ed/grade10/ecology/symbiosis/commen.htm](http://www.botany.uwc.ac.za/sci_ed/grade10/ecology/symbiosis/commen.htm) [accessed January 25, 2007].

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> *Federal Police Inquiry*, no. 232/2005-DPF/FIG/PR, July 2005.

organizations that appear in this study were changed to preserve their identities. All individuals cited are facing judicial trials and are innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

## **1. Operation Panorama**

In the Brazilian corner of the TBA, a criminal organization had been carrying out illicit activities that could support individuals coming from the Middle East who had links with terrorism. Information indicated that this organization developed criminal schemes based on false marriages and counterfeiting of identification documents (I.D.s), in order to provide certified documents and legal status (i.e., Brazilian citizenship) to illegal immigrants. Later, it was discovered that the organization was partaking in other criminal activities, like clandestine phone communications, counterfeiting of international flight tickets, smuggling, and credit card fraud, providing money, communication and transport to those same illegal aliens.

SANTER's investigations exposed the organization's two leaders: Mohammed and his nephew Ali, who controlled all criminal activities. Mohammed was the organization's head and Ali was Mohammed's right hand man. Mohammed had a split personality. The first was that of a respectful religious man (Islamic) who enjoyed popularity in the local community. He was the owner of the Safe House Hotel as well as the owner of a jewelry store, the Golden 1000. But Mohammed had a dark side as well.

Information revealed that Mohammed was a Hamas operative acting in the TBA area in order to support Hamas' terrorist purposes in the Middle East. Ali was a young man in his late twenties with no higher education. Despite this, Ali was the manager of Mohammed's Safe House Hotel. Ali was the organization's face; he handled the command and control of the cells, all under his uncle's rule.



During the investigations, no operational terrorists were captured. In fairness, the DPF acted promptly before the criminal structure could be used to support terrorists. The crimes perpetrated by the criminal organization (CRIMORG) would aid terrorists linked to Hamas and its allies with logistics (money, shelter, and transport), communication and a Brazilian legal status. Consequently, the CRIMORG would be in the position to provide a safe haven for terrorists.

However, Brazil for terrorists is neither a safe place nor a haven and the structure built by Mohammed and Ali was neutralized in June 2005 by SANTER, which launched Operation Panorama. Panorama wiped out the entire organization. Twenty one suspects, who had managed six different criminal schemes, were arrested. Documents, computers, and counterfeiting tools were confiscated. The whole criminal structure was erased. In doing so, the CRIMORG was unable to provide any future support to other Hamas operatives.

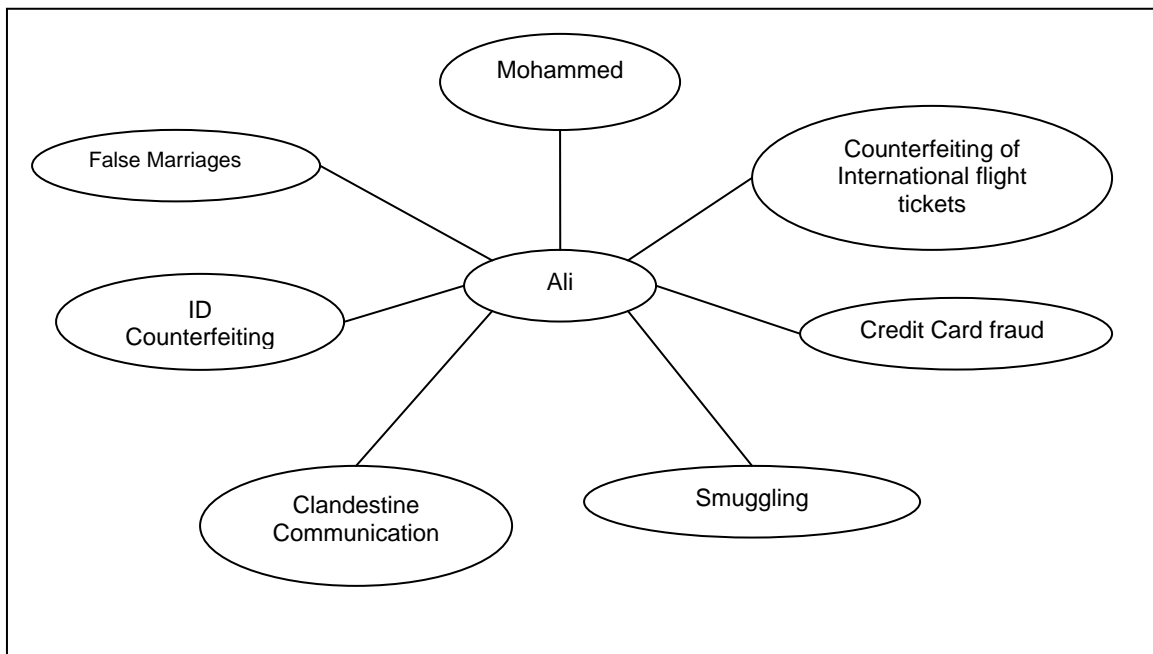


Figure 3. The criminal activities.

The organization was divided into cells responsible for a particular sort of crime. The diversification of criminal activity resulted in the organization's six-cell

structure, each of which perpetrated the corresponding crimes as shown in Figure 3. To better illustrate how the CRIMORG worked, the false marriage and credit fraud schemes are analyzed in detail.

In the false marriage scheme, illegal Arab immigrants were married to Brazilian women who worked in Mohammed's Safe House Hotel. Those Arabs entered Brazil on a tourist visa and lodged in Mohammed's hotel. Mohammed's primary objective was to assimilate the illegal Arabs into the Arab community. Then Mohammed helped the illegals acquire employment in the Brazilian Arab community. After integration into the community, they began to play a role in one of the CRIMORG cells. In general, the women who married the illegal Arabs were hard laborers. Mohammed and Ali paid them an average of \$1,000 US dollars to take the vows. The women did not know who their "husbands" were, and were to maintain only a "professional contact" with them. The objective was to provide the alien husbands a Brazilian background through marriage which would facilitate their process of Brazilian naturalization.

Another pillar of this grand plot was a corrupt immigrant agent who, unfortunately, was a federal agent. In June 2005, he was arrested with the others gangsters. He had received money to confirm the legality of the marriage, and would attest, for instance, the Safe House Hotel's address as the false couple's legal residence. Given that the organization was neutralized early, only four spurious marriages were committed.

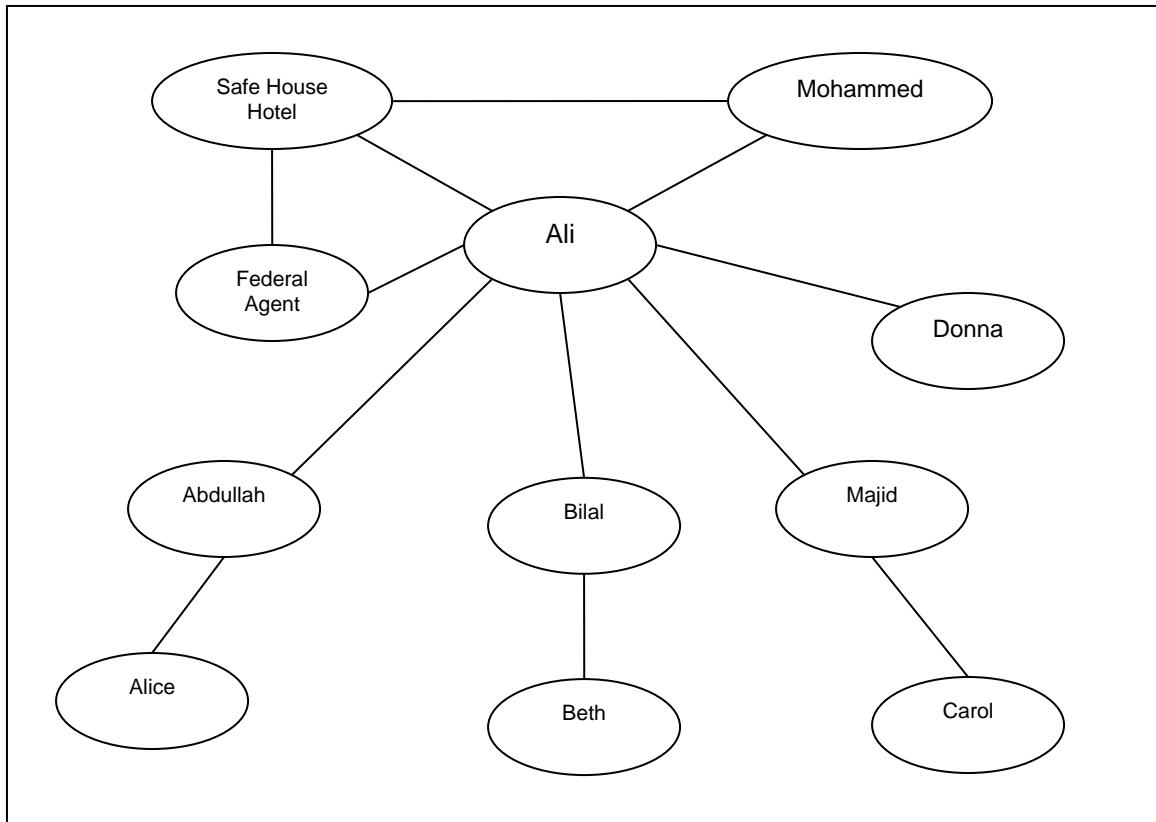


Figure 4. False Marriage Scheme.

In this scheme the false brides were Alice, Beth, Carol and Donna. These women married Abdullah, Bilal, Majid, and Ali, respectively. Even Ali benefited from this scheme. Following the marriage, the women and the illegal Arabs were dismissed and did not see each other anymore. When the illegal Arab alien got his Brazilian citizenship, his “spouse” would be ordered to file for divorce. Figure 4 depicts this example of the false marriage scheme.

The second scheme involved credit card fraud. This scheme was designed to provide illegal funding for the organization. Stores belonging to Arab businessmen were used by the organization to steal customer’s credit card or debit card personal identification numbers (PIN). With those data, a fake credit card or debit card was made and used to withdraw money in automatic teller machines (ATMs) or to get money back during shopping in convenience stores.

Ali obtained the electronic devices capable of stealing those data with his Arab partners, Amer, Baalbaki, Charaf, and a shadowy man known only as “Chris”; all four were specialists in credit card fraud. Ali rented out the electronic devices to Arab businessmen to be used in their own stores, in order to pull in even more money. The money stolen by the CRIMORG in this scheme was then shared between the store owners, the specialists and the organization’s core, namely Ali and Mohammed. The stores involved in this scheme were Genius electronics and Millennia electronics. The first belonged to Salif I, Salif II and Grace. The second belonged to Salafi I and Salafi II. Figure 5 depicts this credit card fraud scheme.

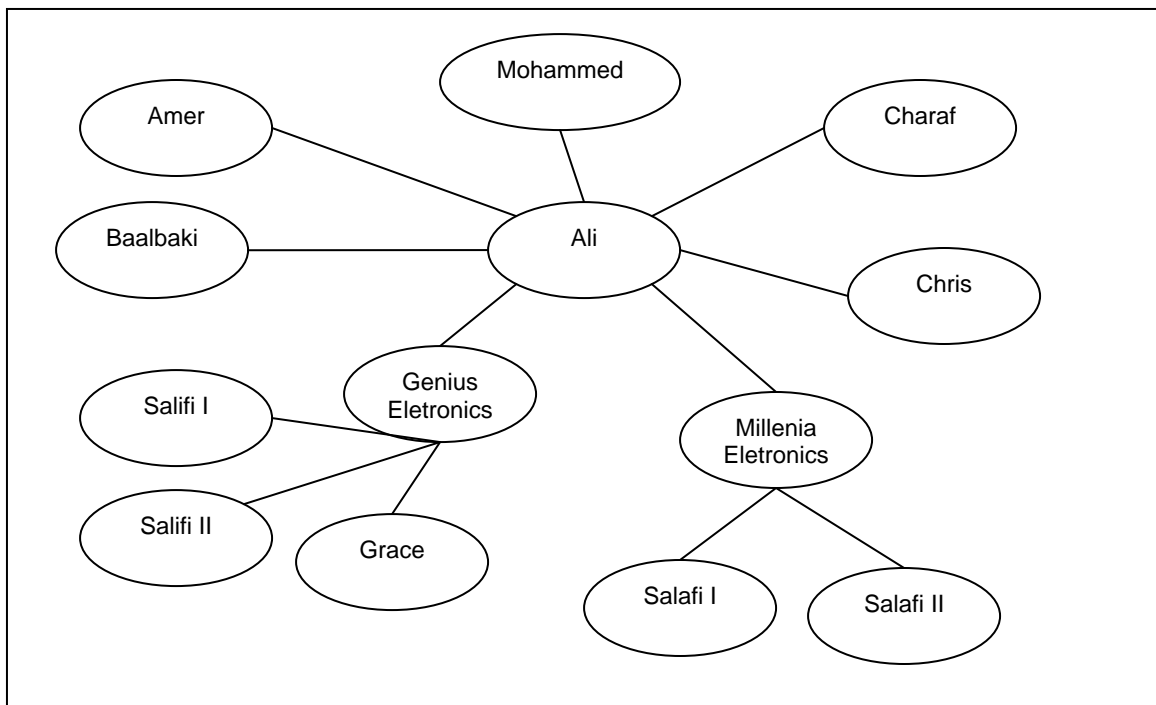


Figure 5. Credit card fraud scheme.

Using this scheme the CRIMORG had means by which to finance terrorist operations. The organization could raise funds in the TBA, sending those funds to the Middle East in support of Hamas. Another possibility was to provide money to terrorists hidden within Brazil who were illegal immigrants supported by the false marriage scheme.

**a.     *The Criminal Organization Analysis***

Analyzing the crime organization's configuration, one can affirm that it was divided into parallel operating units. Accordingly, there was a standardization of outputs. Each criminal cell was engaged in a specific kind of criminal activity, jointly contributing to achieve the organization's overall objective: supporting HAMAS' terrorist endeavors. As noted earlier, the differing missions, which supported terror, included false marriages and counterfeiting of passports and I.D.s, credit card fraud and smuggling, clandestine phone communications, and the counterfeiting of international airline tickets.

Observing these various missions, it is also possible to assert that the CRIMORG was configured in a divisionalized form. Henry Mintzberg, famed organizational design guru, claims that:

Organizations will sometimes be divided into parallel operating units, allowing autonomy to the middle-line managers of each, with coordination achieved through the standardization of outputs (including performance) of these units. The configuration called the divisionalized form emerges.<sup>76</sup>

**b.     *Organizational Purpose, Strategy and Effectiveness***

The CRIMORG had two overall missions. Referenced above, Mohammed oversaw one of these two which consisted of providing legal Brazilian status to would-be terrorists as a means to support HAMAS terrorist activities. The second, also discussed, involved fraud in an attempt to fill their coffers. The purpose of these two missions was to achieve the following results: obtain Brazilian legal status, money, communication, and transport. These outcomes brought money to the gangsters and enabled Mohammed to have the needed structure which would facilitate HAMAS.

Mohammed's strategy to achieve the organizational goals was to organize specialty cells, each with a different mission (i.e., crime). Each cell did

not know the existence of the others. The link between the cells was Ali, who served as the organization's supervisor; Mohammed was never seen. His public image was preserved as a religious man and a businessman, and his commands were carried out by Ali.

To analyze the performance of this crime organization, it is useful to apply the goal approach to organizational effectiveness. In the words of Richard L. Daft:

The goal approach to organizational effectiveness is concerned with the output side and whether the organization achieves its goals in terms of desired levels of output.

The goal approach to effectiveness consists of identifying an organization's output goals and assessing how well the organization has attained those goals.

The important goals to consider are operative goals. Operative goals reflect activities the organization is actually performing.<sup>77</sup>

Criminals, as a rule, are narrowly concerned with what they can get from their crimes. They do not possess moral values nor care about society, their victims, or even their own partners. They have but one objective: to acquire material goods. Mohammed's organization was no different. What was necessary to do would be done. Money for the gangsters and support for Mohammed's Hamas fellows overrode all decisions and actions. Therefore, identifying and assessing the organization's output goals are the best approach to measure CRIMORG effectiveness.

Analyzing this organizational effectiveness using a goal approach perspective, it is possible to state that the DPF neutralized Mohammed's organization because its outputs in a short period of time demonstrated that it was fully capable of assisting HAMAS terrorist operatives in the TBA area.

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<sup>76</sup> Henry Mintzberg, "Organization Design: Fashion or fit?" *Harvard Business Review* (1980): 4.

<sup>77</sup> Daft, *Essentials of Organization Theory*, 25.

## **2. Command and Control**

Scott Snook states that "... whatever you divide, you have to integrate, coordinate or control. The more one divides, the more effort required to coordinate or control."<sup>78</sup> There was no coordination between the cells. They worked independently. As a rule, each cell did not know about the existence of the other one. Their activities were compartmented to provide security. Even if one cell was discovered, the others would be safe.

At the same time, Ali maintained a structure of control. He alone controlled the cells and executed Mohammed's orders. Unfortunately for Mohammed, this personal control was the factor which enabled SANTER to link all cells to Ali and, ultimately, to Mohammed.

Mohammed was the capo of the organization. Nevertheless, his command was undercover, and he observed a single channel through which to pass his orders. He issued the commands and Ali executed them. In fact, even Ali did not know the whole story about the aid to HAMAS' operatives. Primarily, Ali acted to make money and to help Arabs, like him, to start a new life in Brazil. Perhaps his ignorance about the strong links to terrorism, in which Mohammed was involved, put Ali in a fragile position. Either way, he did not perform in a disciplined way in terms of security. Rather, he acted as a mere gangster. He did not know that the crimes he and his partners committed were inserted into a context of terrorism linking South America and Middle East.

## **3. Lessons Learned**

The analysis of Mohammed's criminal organization draws some conclusions about investigations related to organized crime and terrorism. The most important conclusion serves as a lesson learned for future police

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<sup>78</sup> Snook A. Scott, *Friendly Fire, The Accidental Shoot Down of U.S. Black Hawks over Northern Iraq* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2000).

operations: the existence of nodes that connect criminal cells are the weak points in a criminal organization supporting terrorism.

In Mohammed's organization, the weak point was his right hand man, Ali. Understanding Ali's behavior and activities was the key point in uncovering the whole organization. He acted as a business man and kept contact with all criminal cells trying to control the production of outputs of his partners. Moreover, he controlled those crimes with no notion that there was another reason beyond the money. As a result, he did not act as a terrorist operative in a disciplined fashion. Quite the contrary, Ali was seduced by the easy money and the advantages of his new financial status, buying new cars and spending his fortune in night clubs.

This is a risk that terrorists must deny. Their organizations are not "closed systems."<sup>79</sup> They depend on their environment in order to gain logistic support, communications and shelter. Herein lies the principal lesson. Security forces can catch terrorists and neutralize their schemes by investigating the connections between terrorist activities and criminal activities used to support terrorism.

Surely, security issues are important to any criminal organization. In its environment, it must guard against the efforts of law enforcement. The challenge to a criminal organization is standardizing its security procedures. But this takes time. Meetings, teleconferences, long phone conversations, and e-mails are measures that can bring fragility to the organization's security. For that reason, the organization's leadership has to regulate security amongst the many cells. If the law enforcement agency responsible for eradicating organizations begins its work quickly, the organization's security structure will present crucial fragilities that can be successfully exploited.

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<sup>79</sup> Daft, *Essentials of Organization Theory*, 6.



#### **IV. STRATEGIC LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSE TO TERRORISM IN THE TBA**

As a rule, scholars and experts analyze the terrorist problem found in the TBA area by just pointing out well known problems<sup>80</sup> and suggesting simplistic, common-sense responses.<sup>81</sup> John Lombardi and David Sanchez, for instance, affirm that:

In the final analysis, there is little doubt as to the strategic importance of the TBA. The estimated numbers mentioned throughout this chapter illustrate the potential regional and international security threat resident in this permissive environment.<sup>82</sup>

Concluding, they say:

Better governance, free markets, a modern strategy to improve regional security, and clear communication of U.S. and Latin American interests are fundamental to combating terrorism and securing peace and prosperity in the hemisphere.<sup>83</sup>

This is the typical proposition found that is related to responses to be applied in the TBA to combat terrorism. Surely, these general propositions are necessary, but they are not sufficient to build a response that can bring about solid results in terms of suppression of terrorist activities in the Triple Frontier. Maybe these ideas are presented because the majority of analysts do not really know the TBA area, and they write their papers based on CNN-type reports or out-of-date papers, as well as common knowledge.

Conversely, this chapter goes where just a few authors have gone before. It presents a feasible strategic response to combat terrorism in the TBA area. Based on the evidence presented in previous chapters, particularly the one

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<sup>80</sup> Hudson. "Terrorist and Organized Crime Groups."

<sup>81</sup> Lombardi and Sanchez. "Terrorism Financing."

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

related to the terrorist problem found in the TBA area, the strategy that is developed in this chapter is framed in a law enforcement perspective.

The essence of law enforcement is the maintenance of order and crime control. These efforts are enhanced by criminal investigations and the arrest of suspects of crimes including murder, burglary, fraud and drug trafficking. The police are generally concerned with accomplishing these overall missions. Surely, the nature and vocation of a law enforcement organization is based on the prevention and prosecution of criminal activities. In James Q. Wilson's words, "the average citizen thinks of the police as an organization primarily concerned with preventing crime and catching criminals."<sup>84</sup> However, if society is threatened as a whole by activities that are beyond ordinary crime, such as international terrorism, the police must play a new role and extend their mission to inhibit terrorist activities inside the homeland.

Before the attacks in New York and Washington,<sup>85</sup> terrorism was not a priority for federal law enforcement agencies, and not a concern for local police forces. Western countries used to consider international terrorism as an issue that did not impact the homeland. Consequently, even federal law enforcement agencies did not pay much attention to international terrorism within their borders. Police investigations and operations were concentrated on the top issues of a law enforcement agenda, such as drug trafficking, bank robbery, and fraud. Peter Chalk and William Rosenau, assessing the role of the police in counterterrorism efforts prior to 9/11, state:

The FBI never developed a truly coordinated, systematic domestic counterterrorism intelligence capacity. This was due in part to the bureau's own stress on traditional, case-based criminal investigations, and in part to the on-going salience of national political context that was anxious to ensure the intelligence abuses of the past would not be repeated. Over time, special agents

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<sup>84</sup> James Q. Wilson, *Thinking about Crime* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1983), 61.

<sup>85</sup> The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002).

became reluctant to associate with any sort of “undesirables,” even when such sources could provide important information on terrorism. As a result of these factors, human intelligence (HUMINT) was relatively underutilized tool within the FBI. “Agents [did not] like a to go into mosques,” two journalists concluded recently, adding that the “so-called right of sanctuary was drummed into young FBI agents during their training at Quantico: ‘you don’t chase a thief into a cathedral.’”<sup>86</sup>

But when the facts change, the conclusion must change as well. Security agencies have learned that lesson the hard way. The truth of the matter is that it took a tragic event involving thousand of deaths for law enforcement to change its approach to terrorism within the homeland. Moreover, the grandiosity of the 9/11 attacks showed that a national effort including local, regional and federal actors would be necessary to halt the terror threat. Dan Verton affirms that:

The attacks also prompted vast changes in the way U.S. law enforcement and intelligence communities work, the technologies they employ, the methods they use to cooperate with one another, and how they transfer information and knowledge. Legislation was passed that gave sweeping new powers to domestic law enforcement and intelligence agencies, while shifting the traditional balance of power away from the judicial branch in favor of a much more powerful executive branch.<sup>87</sup>

The police, from the local sheriff’s office to the federal branch, play a strategic role in the so-called “Global War on Terror,” namely counterterrorism. This new law enforcement role is executed through police intelligence operations, covert investigations, information flow, sharing of databases, and permanent communication, coordination and collaboration (C<sup>3</sup>) between all security agencies involved in the fight against terror. This approach creates conditions to establish a national counterterrorist structure that operates on a network basis to face

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<sup>86</sup> Peter Chalk and William Rosenau, “Intelligence, Police, and Counterterrorism: Assessing Post-9/11 Initiatives,” (2003), <http://proquest.umi.com.libproxy.nps.navy.mil/pqdweb?RQT=511&sid=3&restriction=1&TS=1150241707> [accessed May 15, 2006].

<sup>87</sup> Dan Verton, *Black Ice: The Invisible Threat of Cyber-Terrorism* (California: McGraw-Hill, 2003), vii.

terrorism. Working on counterterrorism, law enforcement agencies must work more closely with the intelligence community to generate strategic information in support of national security policies such as immigration and money flow.

Inserted into this new and complex environment, the perspective of a law enforcement operation is broader than ever in its new homeland security role. In Thomas O'Connor's words:

That partner known as law enforcement has always served a first responder role, and it even has some experience at counter subversive and anti-terrorist (domestic) activities, but today's challenge involves taking on enemies (modern international terrorists) who fight in asymmetric ways that mock constitutional safeguards which balance criminal rights with police powers. Law enforcement has also always been a small-town, decentralized phenomenon in American society, and without new models, theories, and laws, it may not be up to the task of collecting, sharing, coordinating, and analyzing the intelligence necessary to successfully assess and respond to modern-day threats. It may be time for a revolution in police affairs, much like the revolution in military affairs toward special, light brigades that are jointly coordinated in real-time.<sup>88</sup>

In closing, he adds:

It is definitely the time to reconsider the police role in society, and to what extent police involvement in national defense and domestic security carries a risk of encroachment on civil liberties.<sup>89</sup>

The police force is the most capable instrument to combat terrorism within the homeland. The police already have an efficient and effective structure working with personnel specialized in security and investigation. The existing structure needs only be adjusted to add a counterterrorism branch. This requires education, agent specialization, improvement of investigation methods and operations to combat terrorism. Fortunately, the spirit and vocation to protect the

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<sup>88</sup> O'Connor, "The integration of Homeland Security."

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

community is inherent in police forces. Edward J. Tully and E.L. Willoughby, analyzing the role of local and state police agencies in US domestic counterterrorism, assert that:

It is very important that our first line of defense against terrorism - the seven hundred thousand officers on the street - be given adequate training and background information on terrorism, the methods and techniques of the terrorists, and the likelihood of an imminent attack. The reason this information should be shared, or available, is not so that state and local police can be involved in the investigation of terrorist cells, or individual terrorists, or collecting raw intelligence information. Rather it is simply that these officers know their territory and are on the street 24 hours a day.<sup>90</sup>

They conclude saying:

Considering that the terrorists who attacked the World Trade Center were stopped on several occasions by the local police prior to the attack for minor traffic violations, it is logical to assume that this pattern of random interception would continue in the future. If and when similar situations occur, our local and state officers should have background knowledge by which to arrive at a reasonable suspicion. Thereafter, the officers should have the ability to access national data banks to assist in the further resolution of the matter at hand. This is a largely ignored but critical asset in our struggle to contain terrorism.<sup>91</sup>

The police must improve intelligence efforts. As a crucial piece on the homeland security chess board, law enforcement must develop investigations with a higher level of secrecy and extend its investigations to non-criminal activity. In the words of O'Connor:

Clearly, the purpose is to identify, halt and where appropriate, prosecute terrorists as well as those who provide them logistic. It primarily involves a tracking mission for law enforcement, and only secondarily a prosecutorial mission, or bringing terrorists to justice.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Edward J. Tully and E. L. Willoughby, "Terrorism: The Role of Local and State Police Agencies," (2002) <http://www.neiassociates.org/state-local.htm> [accessed April 26, 2006].

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> O'Connor, "The integration of Homeland Security."

As shown in Chapter III, another actor is inserted into the international terror context that makes law enforcement efforts more relevant in counterterrorism initiatives, namely organized crime. Here, organized crime and terrorism come together, and in a scenario like this, the police are the appropriate statecraft tool to combat terrorism.

As a result, a strategic law enforcement response is the ideal one to lead the process of counterterrorism in the Triple Frontier area. Here, a syllogism is necessary as reference to think about counterterrorist measures in the TBA: Crime is the center of gravity (COG) for terrorism in the TBA. The best response to crime is effective law enforcement. Therefore, law enforcement efforts are the best response to terrorism in the TBA. Surely, these are efforts that must be applied in coordination and cooperation with other agencies like intelligence, financial intelligence units (FIU), and customs. However, the primordial element that drives and leads the counterterrorist efforts in the TBA has to be law enforcement. Moreover, these efforts must be conducted on all sides of the border, involving security agencies of Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay.

#### **A. THE ART LYKKE MODEL**

In order to establish the strategic counterterrorist role of Law Enforcement in the TBA area it is necessary to use a strategic theory to orient this effort. Harry Richard Yarger explains:

Strategy is all about how (way or concept) leadership will use the power (means or resources) available to the state to exercise control over sets of circumstances and geographic locations to achieve objectives (ends) that support state interests. Strategy provides direction for the coercive or persuasive use of this power to achieve specified objectives.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Harry Richard Yarger, "Towards a Theory of Strategy: Art Lykke and the Army War College Strategy Model," <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/army-usawc/stratpap.htm> [accessed May 31, 2006].

So, a strategy based on the three-element framework (Ends–Ways–Means) will provide the directions that guide the police to the correct and optimal approach to combat terrorism in the Triple Frontier.

Comprehension of the whole problem’s complexity (macro perspective), a well defined purpose, technological tools, consolidated techniques, highly qualified personnel, a budget proportional to the task’s size, and concepts of actions to achieve the objective will compound the framework that allows the police to present effective responses to terrorism. Moreover, coordination between law enforcement and the intelligence community will be the crucial factor for success in this enterprise.

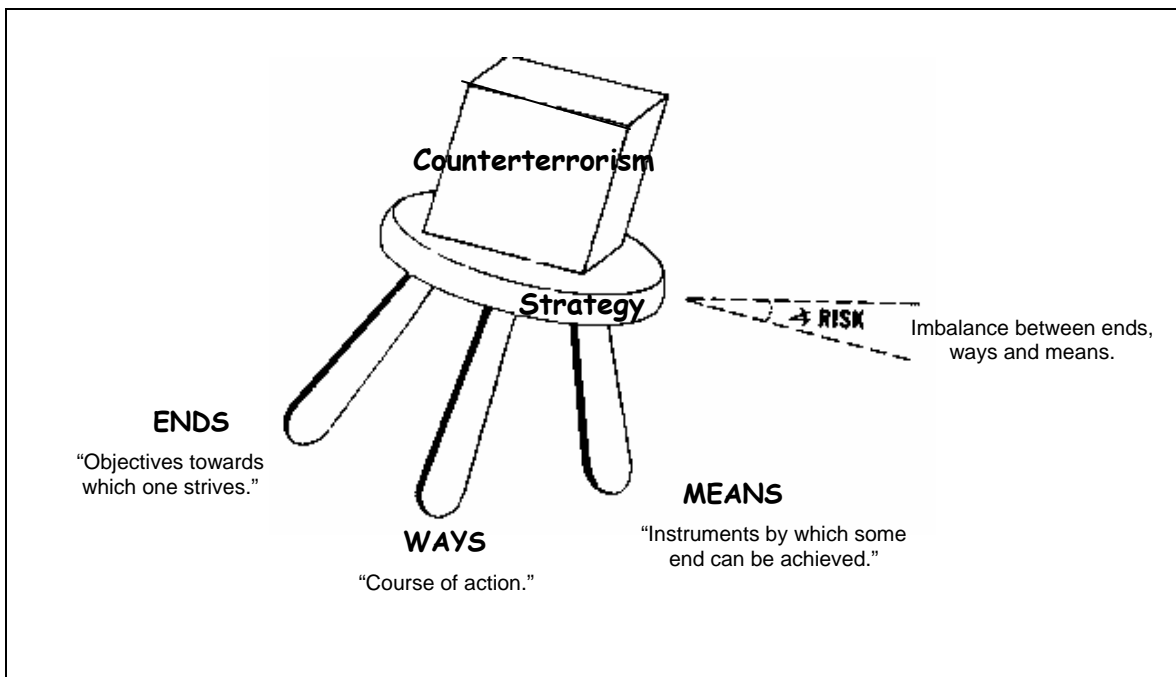


Figure 6. Arthur F. Lykke, Jr. model.

The Arthur F. Lykke, Jr. model<sup>94</sup> (depicted above in Figure 6) has the form of a stool with three supporting bases, namely: (1) the ends, (2) the ways and (3) the means. This model was inspired by the military, but has applicability in others areas such as homeland security and national defense. In the words of

<sup>94</sup> Lykke, Jr., "Toward an Understanding of Military Strategy," 183.

Arthur F. Lykke, Jr., “this general concept can be as a basis for the formulation of any type of strategy – military, political, economic, etc., depending upon the element of national employed.”<sup>95</sup> Harry Richard Yarger adds:

It should be evident that the model poses three key questions for strategists. What is to be done? How is it to be done? What resources are required to do it in this manner? The stool tilts if the three legs are not kept in balance. If any leg is too short, the risk is too great and the strategy falls over.<sup>96</sup>

Ends, ways and means must be kept in balance. If the objective is pertinent and well defined, but there is no idea of how to achieve it, the objective is nothing else than a chimera. Furthermore, if the objective and course of action are plausible, but there are no resources to support them, nothing will be done. This loss of balance happens when the risk, which is “the gap between what is to be achieved and the concepts and resources available to achieve the objective,” brings about failure to the strategy effort. Yarger asserts that:

Since there are never enough resources or a clever enough concept to assure 100% success in the competitive international environment, there is always some risk. The strategist seeks to minimize this risk through his development of the strategy--the balance of ends, ways, and means.<sup>97</sup>

Lykke’s model will be used to sustain a law enforcement strategy to support their role in the counterterrorist effort in the Triple Frontier. This strategic role of law enforcement is conducted on the premise that police act as the instrument of homeland security promoting counterterrorism. To develop this effort, a framework of ends, ways, and means must be developed.

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<sup>95</sup> Lykke, Jr., “Toward an Understanding of Military Strategy,” 179.

<sup>96</sup> Yarger, “Towards a Theory of Strategy.”

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.



## **B. THE ENDS**

The overall goal of law enforcement conducting counterterrorist efforts is to halt the terror threat within its national borders. But, it is not enough to be focused on terrorist organizations or *Jihadis* to combat terror. Counterterrorism efforts must also be concerned with a large spectrum of activities capable of supporting terrorist endeavors.

As an agency responsible for counterterrorism, the police must maintain the following objectives in the TBA: (1) prevent any terrorist activity; (2) inhibit the performance of individuals or groups that support terrorism; (3) neutralize criminals or criminal organizations that support terrorism; (4) suppress any activity related to terrorism that is already in progress; and (5) respond to any terror act in order to promptly identify its authors, their connections, and all nuances of the attack.

This leg of the stool (ends) in the TBA has five faces: prevention, inhibition, neutralization, suppression and response. These five missions have to guide the counterterrorist efforts in the Triple Frontier. In order for the strategy be effective, all five objectives must be stressed.

Of course, the police of the three countries must prioritize these objectives. Even acting within their own borders, they can share information and knowledge, keeping their counterterrorist efforts in balance. If just one or two countries stray from these aims, it will cause an imbalance in the whole strategy effort and there will be enough room for terrorists to act within the Tri-border area. Hence, the individual strategies built in each country will form a grand counterterrorist strategy with common goals for the region. Those objectives will drive the strategy and dictate what resources and concepts will be applied.

## **C. THE WAYS**

The strategic course of action that enables the police to accomplish those objectives in the TBA area must permit a smooth process of investigation and

operation. The rule of thumb is a planning guide that combines coordination, cooperation, and collaboration with sharing of information and knowledge between all agencies engaged in counterterrorism in all three countries.

The accomplishment of the objectives will come about with identification, localization and obliteration of organizations or individuals suspected of terrorist endeavors. The identification consists of knowing who the enemy really is. In the sixth century BC, Sun Tzu wrote:

So it is said that if you know your enemies and know yourself, you will not be imperiled in a hundred battles; if you do not know your enemies but do know yourself, you will win one and lose one; if you do not know your enemies nor yourself, you will be imperiled in every single battle.<sup>98</sup>

Consequently, groups and individuals that are within the TBA area and have any kind of link with terrorism, and any organizations that support terrorism, must be monitored. Their interfaces and networks have to be discovered, and their *modus operandi* must be well-known in order to anticipate their movements.

Surely, an extensive database with information on those groups and individuals is needed. Furthermore, this data has to be shared and accessed in real time by all security agencies on the three sides of the border, and spread among international security agencies. The key here is coordination and cooperation efforts forming a protective network aware of any kind of suspect movement that might result in terror activities. As stated by Phil Williams:

Government and law enforcement agencies have to think and act much more in network terms; they need to develop the same kind of flexibility to operate both nationally and transnationally through the creation of informal transnational law enforcement networks based on trust that is exhibited by drug-trafficking networks.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Wikipedia, "The Art of War," [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Art\\_of\\_War#Quotations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Art_of_War#Quotations) [accessed May 15, 2006].

<sup>99</sup> Phil Williams, "The Nature of Drug-Trafficking Networks," *Current History*, (April 1998): 159.

Finding suspects will be the consequence of a successful safeguarding network. With the right information, at the right time, and shared in the Triple Frontier territory, determining the location of the terrorist suspects will be more likely accomplished.

After confirming the terror connections and activities, the organization or individuals suspected of terrorism must be neutralized. This neutralization consists of arresting all suspects and liquidating the apparatus used to plan the execution of terrorist endeavors to include documents, computers, and communication devices.

But it is not enough to merely neutralize. Actually, wiping out terrorism is a process that completes the breakup of all networks and connections that support terrorist activities. If only the core and principal actors of a terrorist enterprise are neutralized, the structure will still be active and able to support terrorism or aid another terrorist operating cell.

In order to develop those efforts, police forces in the TBA area can use the following model shown in Figure 7, which consists of a guide to investigate and neutralize terrorist organizations or individuals connected with terrorism.

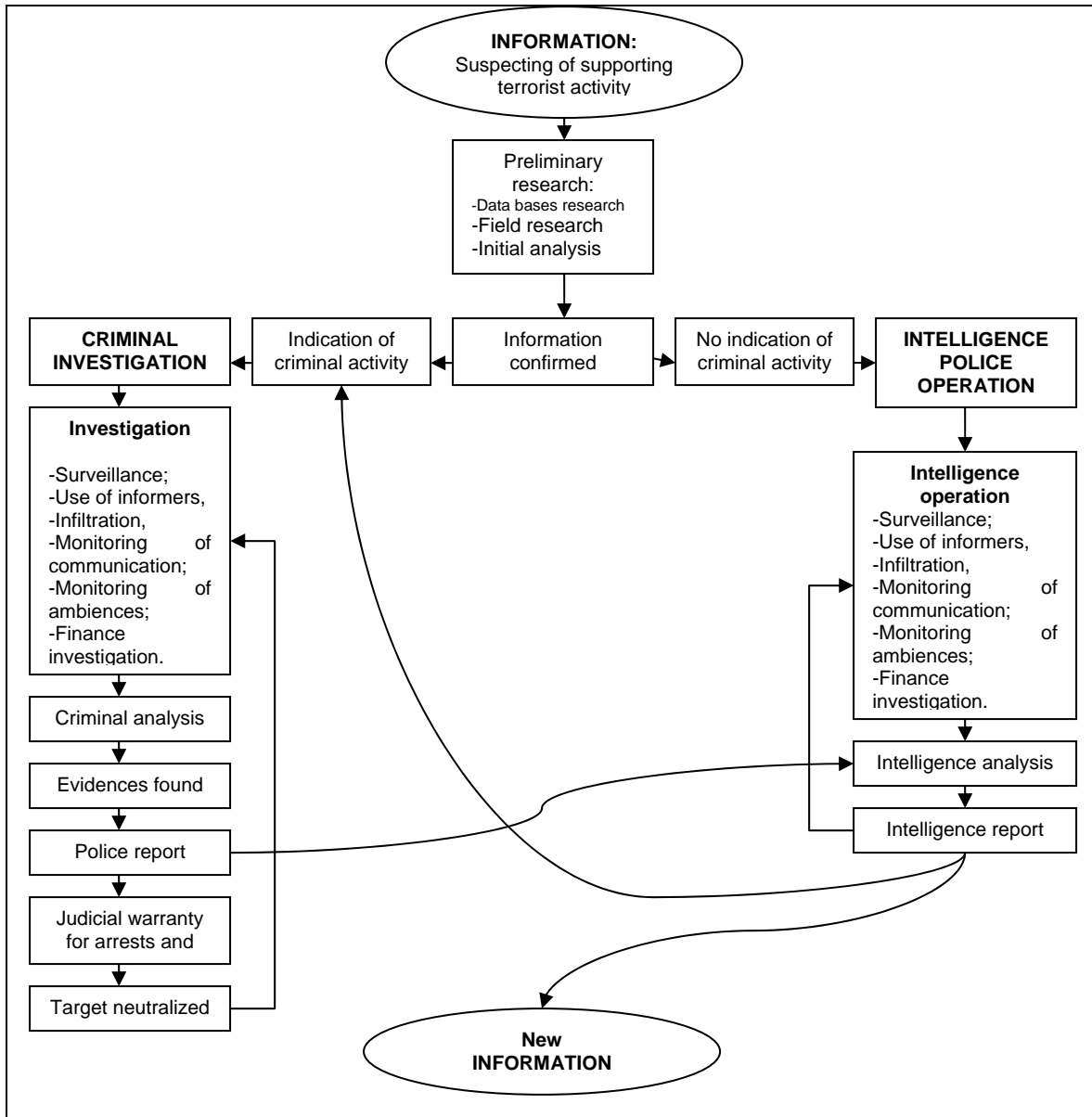


Figure 7. Author's model to investigate and neutralize terrorist organizations.

This model permits synchronization between criminal investigations and police intelligence operations. All processes start with information, which points to the possible existence of terrorist activities. If there is an indication that criminal activities connected with terrorism are imminent or ongoing, a police investigation will be launched with parallel support of intelligence analysis. On the other hand, if there is no indication of crime but the information indicates the

presence of suspects with the potential capacity for perpetrating terrorist activities, an intelligence operation will be initialized.

The relevant factors in this model are coordination and cooperation between criminal investigations and intelligence efforts. Coordination is stressed using: (1) mutual adjustment, which is based on the simple process of informal communication; (2) standardization, achieved on the drawing board with education and training; and (3) direct supervision, by having one person take responsibility for the work of others, issuing instructions and monitoring their actions.

Furthermore, the police intelligence unit promotes the link between law enforcement and the intelligence community. The basis of this relationship is coordination, cooperation and communication (C<sup>3</sup>), promoting the sharing of information and knowledge. Consequently, the information produced by police investigations and police intelligence operations is shared with intelligence agencies both nationally and internationally.

#### **D. THE MEANS**

Leading counterterrorism efforts within the TBA, law enforcement agencies must be provided with the necessary resources to achieve their objectives. The means available to execute ordinary law enforcement duties within the Triple Frontier are not sufficient to face counterterrorism efforts. More resources (e.g., people, equipment, finances and facilities) are needed. Training and education are required as well. Among all the elements that comprise the framework of resources that must be increased in order to develop the strategic role of law enforcement in the TBA, an increase of personnel has to be the most important. Trained, motivated, and appropriately compensated law enforcement agents, who have experience and competence in crime prosecution, can carry out an excellent process of combating terror. Without training and motivation,

domestic counterterrorism will be approached by police forces as simply another duty, and the necessary concern for this strategic issue for homeland security will not exist.

One big step toward improving the means of supporting the counterterrorist strategy in the TBA was the establishment of the Intelligence Regional Office (IRO), within the Triple Frontier,<sup>100</sup> which came about as a project developed by the “three plus one” forum.

The IRO brings together the security agencies in law enforcement and intelligence from Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay, allowing a smooth process of coordination, collaboration and cooperation between them, in order to develop efforts to combat organized crime and terrorism. The IRO should avoid any lack of interoperability<sup>101</sup> between the security agencies within the TBA, stopping possible frictions related to interagency conflicts and strategic gaps that exist among the agencies. In doing so, the IRO will grant synchronization to prosecute criminals and terrorists.

## **E. THE RISK**

A strategy will be victorious if there is balance between its basic elements: objectives, ways and means. This balance allows the strategy to: (1) obtain the desired effect; (2) have enough resources to accomplish the plan of action; and (3) establish a good cost-benefit analysis determining if the strategy is feasible. James F. Holcomb, Jr. asserts that:

The definition of risk is the degree to which strategic objectives, concepts and resources are in or out of balance. Since strategy is a dynamic process, one must understand that all three elements are variable and subject to change over time.

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<sup>100</sup> Parana-Online, “Brazil will have an Intelligence center in the Triple Frontier” (Brasil terá centro de inteligência da Tríplice Fronteira), <http://www.parana-online.com.br/noticias/index.php?op=ver&ano=temp&id=225565&caderno=17,8/16/2006> [accessed November 28, 2006].

<sup>101</sup> Donald J. Reed, “Why Strategy Matters in the War on Terror,” *Homeland Security Affairs* II, no. 3 (October 2006), <http://www.hsaj.org/?article=2.3.10> [accessed February 22, 2007].

Concluding, he affirms:

The formulation of effective strategy for any endeavor is a constant quest to ensure balance among the variables. The definition applies to all aspects of strategy development whether dealing with national security (grand) strategy, defense, military or theater strategies, business strategy or even personal strategies.<sup>102</sup>

Surely there are a considerable number of factors that can come about as risks for a strategy, such as political, bureaucratic and organizational dilemmas. However, the biggest risk that can bring about instability among objectives, ways, and means in the presented strategic framework is a gap between ways and objectives rising from lack of coordination, collaboration and cooperation among the actors that conduct the strategy in the Triple Frontier.

If the actors involved in the strategy do not really interact, regardless of their internal culture and individual goals, in order to create a successful strategy, there will always be room for terror organizations to maneuver within the region. As a consequence, all efforts will be wasted if there is no interaction and reciprocity among the nations and their agencies involved in the strategic endeavor. Moreover, all actors need to share what they know and cooperate with each other.

The three countries that form the TBA must be aware that the convergence of their interests to combat terrorism in the Triple Frontier is necessary but is not enough to sustain a successful counterterrorist strategy for the area. As a consequence, Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay need to implement measures to avoid or at least lower the risk. In other words, continual processes of risk assessment and management are needed to optimize the strategic effort.

The process of risk assessment is “the constant effort to identify and correct imbalances among the key variables.”<sup>103</sup> So, it is necessary to recognize

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<sup>102</sup> James F. Holcomb, Jr., “Strategic Risk,” in *U.S. Army War College Guide to Strategy*, ed. Joseph R. Cerami and James F. Holcomb, Jr., (February 2001), 188.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 193.

when variables change. On the other hand, risk management comes about as a means to adjust the remaining variables to account for the risk. Hence, the TBA countries' security agencies committed to the strategy must be able to: (1) reduce the overall objective to more realistic terms; (2) increase or relocate resources in order to better implement the strategy and achieve the objectives; (3) and use distinct tactical elements in different combinations with varying emphasis to include criminal investigations, such as financial investigations, and police intelligence operations.

The Intelligence Regional Office (IRO) formed by Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay can be the one entity that is able to implement risk assessment and risk management in order to overcome any threat that can affect the strategy. A branch within the IRO formed by representatives of the three countries will develop the assessments and management of the strategy. This branch will promote, for instance, multilateral meetings to review the elements of the strategy, and make the necessary adjustments as a means to improve it. In addition, this permanent forum will be a tool to shrink eventual historic rivalries in the region that make interstate cooperation difficult, promoting a smooth process of cooperation, collaboration and communication.

Of course, there is always some level of risk inherent over any strategy. Actually, risk is immanent for any strategic effort. Moreover, in a "complex environment"<sup>104</sup> like the TBA, the risk is manifested. In such a domain, many diverse external elements interact with and influence the actors involved in the strategy. Security agencies from different countries, including law enforcement and intelligence, criminal organizations, and terrorist organizations all interact in the TBA. Hence, that mechanism of assessment and management of risk is indispensable for strategists in the Triple Frontier in order to overcome possible troublesomeness. In the words of Holcomb, Jr.:

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<sup>104</sup> Daft, *Essentials of Organization Theory*, 55.



Once a strategy is developed, the most important strategic skill and the true mark of strategic “genius” is accounting for potential change and recognizing actual change in a timely enough manner to adjust the strategic variables and thereby ensure a valid strategic equation oriented firmly on achieving the political objectives at hand. This is increasingly difficult to do in a dynamically changing strategic environment with myriad threats, challenges, actors and unclear potential effects.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Holcomb, Jr., “Strategic Risk,” 199.

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## V. CONCLUSION

Because it is a strategy or a tactic, terrorism can be found any place around the globe. It has many faces, different causes, and comes about in distinct ways. One can say that it is like the fingers of a hand which have the same nature and can hold the same threat, but have different sizes, functions, and strength. In the words of Donald J. Reed:

As multiple sources have indicated, “terror” is not the enemy. In the “war” on terror, neither terror nor terrorism can be defeated since terror is a method and terrorism is a tactic. From this perspective, neither terror nor terrorism takes on the characteristics of entities that can be defeated in the traditional sense.<sup>106</sup>

In the Philippines there are terrorist groups inspired by Islam and Communism, such as the Abu Sayyaf Group and the New People's Army. In the Middle East terrorism is linked to groups that fight for the liberation of territories occupied by Israel, such as HAMAS. And in Colombia, there are narco-guerrillas who hide their criminal efforts behind a revolutionary flag, like the FARC.

In the Tri-Border Area, terrorism also has its own characteristics. In that area there are no training camps or operational cells, and there are no groups fighting against any regime. Between the Tropic of Capricorn and parallel 30 in South America, terrorist attacks do not occur. The problems related to terrorism in the TBA are connected with the struggle between Arabs and Israelis in the Middle East. Terrorist groups that wage that “cosmic war,”<sup>107</sup> such as Hezbollah and HAMAS, have operatives in the TBA to raise money and provide logistics to support their groups. In addition, these supporting activities are, as a rule, criminal efforts.

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<sup>106</sup> Reed, “Why Strategy Matters.”

<sup>107</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2003).

So, if terrorism has so many different faces and ways of expression, the responses to it must be as distinct as terrorism itself. There is no magic solution. There is no general response that can be used to stop terrorism in all places of the globe. In each country, terrorism has a different level of threat, and sometimes there is no threat at all. As a consequence, in some places military actions are the best response for terrorism, as when insurgents use terrorism as a strategy. But, in other places, the best tools of statecraft to combat terrorism are intelligence and law enforcement efforts.

Each nation needs its own response to terrorism that fits with its security needs and strategy. It must be a local solution linked to a global counterterrorist effort. In other words, the local authorities, who are the ones strongly touched by the threat, must lead the efforts to combat terrorism in their territories, and these efforts must be harmonized with the will of the international community. Then the response is local, rooted in local security demands; but, at the same time, it comes about globally since it is inserted in an international counterterrorist effort by coordination, cooperation and communication with international security agencies.

In the TBA, the best statecraft instrument to combat terrorism is law enforcement. In the Triple Frontier, crime is the center of gravity for terrorism, so law enforcement agencies are the most capable to deal with this situation. They can better prosecute organizations and individuals that perpetrate crimes to support terrorist groups. Surely, this is not a struggle of a lonely army. The police should lead the process of prosecution, but it might be done in coordination with other security agencies. Financial investigation units (FIU), customs agencies, and intelligence agencies must come together with the police to develop successful counterterrorist efforts.

The three countries that form the Tri-Border Area must develop a strategic approach to combat terrorism. A law enforcement strategy based on ends, ways and means, with emphasis on police intelligence operations and covert criminal investigations is the best response to terrorism in the TBA. The strategy must be

developed by the three countries that form the TBA with full cooperation, collaboration and communication among their security agencies.

In addition, the strategists involved in the TBA counterterrorist strategy must be aware of the risks that can affect the strategic effort. Different kinds of risks can touch that strategy. They can hit the three-element framework (ends, ways and means) in different ways, causing discrepancies among them. Otherwise, the most relevant risk that can bring about instability in such strategy is the absence of coordination, collaboration and cooperation among the TBA security agencies engaged in the strategy. This risk can cause derangement between the strategic ways and objectives. James F. Holcomb, Jr. affirms that:

The essential elements of strategic risk are unchanged through the ages and consist in the proper balancing of ends, ways and means to achieve the desired strategic outcome. Understanding that fundamental relationship and “guessing well” through study, exercise and experience will ensure that assessing and managing strategic risk rises above simply “the comfort level of strategic planners.” <sup>108</sup>

As a consequence, the governments of Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay must implement efforts in order to deal with possible risks that can affect the strategy. A feasible alternative to overcome risks is to use a tool of risk assessment and management. Risk assessment and management can identify and correct imbalances among the strategic key elements and adjust them to overcome the risk. That instrument can be a branch in the Intelligence Regional Office (IRO) in the Triple Frontier comprised of representatives of the three countries focused on the optimization of the strategic effort.

So, the IRO will be an instrument used to make the necessary adjustments in the strategy in order to make it better. Besides, the IRO will promote more interaction among TBA security agencies putting away rivalries in the region, and allow for an easier process of cooperation, collaboration and communication. The IRO will be a permanent forum that will put at the same

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<sup>108</sup> Holcomb, Jr., “Strategic Risk,” 199.

table the actors responsible for the security in the TBA, interacting as a means to ameliorate the counterterrorist strategy in the Triple Frontier.

Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay's governments must be involved in the counterterrorist endeavors in the TBA. Terrorism is not a problem just for one or two countries in the region. It is a problem that is found on the three sides of the border and affects the security, reputation and economy of the three countries.

Security is obviously affected because the presence of terrorist groups, even with no operational cells, creates a convergence of people with bad intentions. Those people go to the TBA to perpetrate crime to support terrorist activities. The economy is affected because the TBA is a place where tourism is one pillar of the local economy,<sup>109</sup> and tourists do not want to share the space with terrorist operatives. The area's reputation is logically affected because the presence of terrorist groups in the region stigmatizes the area as a place that provides safe heaven for terrorists.

So, there is no room for unilateral or bilateral counterterrorist actions in the TBA. Every counterterrorist measure in the TBA must be multilateral, including the three countries plus the international community.

In conclusion, this thesis is a magnifying lens over the TBA area, showing the real dimensions of the terrorist problem in the Triple Frontier. It aims to promote an analysis of the problem, free of intellectual bias, and based on the observation of the facts.

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<sup>109</sup> The City of Foz do Iguacu, "The Ways of the Paradise," <http://www2.fozdoiguacu.pr.gov.br/turismo/default.aspx?opcao=2> [accessed March 23, 2007].

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